

Lynne Gilbert
BRISTOL
LD 257

Feb. 24, 2025

Legislators,

My name is Lynne Gilbert, and I am a year-round resident of Bristol. In 2014 we joined a group of eight other electric customers to form the first consumer-owned community solar farm in Maine, the Edgecomb Community Solar Farm Association.

Even back then, we realized that we needed to put our dollars on the line to ramp up solar energy in Maine. We formed the solar farm because most of us were unable to use rooftop solar at our homes, and we found a willing landlord who also joined the Association. I should mention that my husband and I withdrew a significant portion of our retirement savings to do this. We knew that not only did it agree with our convictions, it made sense for us to have a reliable source of electricity for our later years, especially since we had also invested in heat pumps.

Since then, solar energy has taken off in our state, and now, more than a decade later, our investment has been shown to be not just advantageous for us, but actually really necessary in the fight against global climate change. Last winter's extremely damaging coastal storms showed just how important it is to bring down carbon emissions in order to prevent further harm to our coastal communities in any way we can.

It has been argued by proponents of these bills (LD 32, LD 257, LD 359, and LD 450,) that those of us who have invested in solar energy are causing higher prices for those who can't make such investments. I would argue instead that those folks also benefit from our investment by having a cleaner environment, shelter from the volatility of fossil fuel prices (since more solar in the mix means natural gas prices have less impact), and protection from more extreme damage to our communities in the future.

These bills in their determination to punish solar investment in Maine, will seriously impede the battle against climate change. How can electricity customers in Maine contribute to progress against future emissions if they are deprived of the essential financial component of net energy billing?

In fact, Maine's Public Utility Commission last April found that the economic benefits of net energy billing outweigh the costs of the program, since every dollar spent on the program results in \$1.29 in benefits.

That seems like a no-brainer to me.

None of these bills — LD 32, LD 257, LD 359, nor LD 450 — are good for Maine ratepayers.

Please defeat them.

Thank you.